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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to give a brief overview of the reasons why a model change for servicing children with specific learning needs was recommended for the St. Anthony Village-New Brighton School District, an overview of the Resource Unit model proposed, and a summary report of the Resource Units within a small district's elementary and secondary schools based on data acquired the first semester of the 1973-74 school year. The contents include "Historical Background," "Resource Unit Model Study," "State Guidelines and Reimbursement Patterns for Special Education Services," "Resource Teacher Working Model," "Building Resource Units," "Record Keeping-Forms," "Patterns of Service," "Number of Students Seen by Resource Unit Teachers," and "Considerations." (WR)

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A RESOURCE UNIT MODEL APPROACH FOR SERVICING CHILDREN WITH LEARNING PROBLEMS

An Interdisciplinary Approach to Learning Disabilities

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The purpose of this paper is to give a brief overview as to why a model change for servicing children with special learning needs was recommended for the St. Anthony Village-New Brighton School District, an overview of the Resource Unit model proposed, and a summary report of the Resource Units within a small district's elementary and secondary schools based on data acquired during the first semester of the 1973-74 school term.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1957 the Minnesota State Legislature mandated the public schools to provide special education services for children exhibiting various handicaps. From that mandate, school districts moved toward the establishment of special education classes, within public school settings. These were self-contained classrooms, where children were programmed for most of their school day. There was much discussion related to the pros and cons of this service model. However, the point was usually sold to school boards and communities that the children with special learning needs would at last be scheduled for school classes, and school districts would be meeting State requirements of providing special education.

Many school districts took it upon themselves to integrate many of the children with special problems into the regular classroom, whenever possible. The districts that elected to follow this model soon found that children labelled "Special Education Students" could readily adapt to many of the ongoing academic and social functions which took place within regular classroom settings.

More recently, within the past three or four years, parent groups and special education educators have advocated programming all students, except those with very severe handicaps, into the regular mainstream of education. That is, it is suggested that students with special learning problems can usually fit in with their peer group if they are provided some supplemental teaching help.

Numerous cases involving special education students have been reviewed in the courts of our country the past several years. The resulting litigation has leaned toward the proposal that all children should be provided with mainstream education and that children having specific handicaps or learning problems should be provided supplemental resource services. The trend, in our country and especially in Minnesota, is to mainstream all children and provide resource services as needed.

RESOURCE UNIT MODEL STUDY

During the last half of the 1972-73 school year, the administration, special education instructors and classroom teachers were engaged in the study of a possible change from the special education room model to a resource unit model within the St. Anthony Village-New Brighton school district. Numerous visitations were made to surrounding schools, staff members attended several inservice meetings dealing with the resource unit concept and two staff members were accepted into the SERT (Special Education Resource Teachers) program at the University of Minnesota.

Video tapes of programs dealing with behavior modification and contingency management were viewed by staff members. One inservice workshop day was devoted to the development of various forms, charts and record keeping procedures that would be used in the Resource Units. After a very intensive study of the Resource Unit model had been undertaken, meetings were held in each of the elementary and secondary schools to discuss the concept with all certified staff members.

Upon administrative approval, patterns of service, printed forms and various procedures were set up to establish Resource Units within each of the schools in the fall of 1973. All children in the district were programmed back to their home attendance area schools, and parents were notified as to the intent and procedure of servicing children who exhibit special learning problems.

STATE GUIDELINES AND REIMBURSEMENT PATTERNS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

State guidelines, related to servicing children with handicaps and learning problems, were reviewed thoroughly to assure the district of receiving reimbursement aid towards Resource teachers' salaries as well as special materials purchased for use within the program.

Care was taken during the fall of 1973 to report to the State Department of Education appropriate reimbursable titles, and initials of children who are served in the Resource Units. This was done to meet the State guidelines for reimbursement aid in the areas of speech and language,

special learning and behavior problems, educable mentally retarded, homebound and hospital instruction and school psychological services.

RESOURCE TEACHER WORKING MODEL

In the spring of 1973, a position guide was written to be used as the working model for resource teachers during the 1973-74 school year. The primary functions, major professional responsibilities, illustrations of key duties, and qualifications for resource teachers were included in the position guide. The organizational structure related to coordination and supervisory responsibility of Resource Unit personnel was thoroughly discussed with the administration. The following points were agreed upon as to organizational relationships to be used by members of the Resource Units.

The resource teacher:

1. is accountable to the school psychologist for performance of assigned responsibilities,
2. coordinates work with building resource teacher team and classroom teachers,
3. relates role to building and system-wide programs and objectives,
4. is responsible to the building principal for adherance to to total school policy and practice.

BUILDING RESOURCE UNITS

Resource teachers were assigned to building teams as indicated:

(Certificate Titles used - rather than teachers' names)

Wilshire Park	Park View
Speech & Language Therapist	SLBP
Special Learning & Behavior Problems Teacher	SLBP
Teacher of Educable Mentally Retarded	Remedial Reading Teacher
	Speech & Language Therapist

Silver Oak	Jr-Sr. High School
Remedial Reading Teacher	Teacher of Educable Mentally Retarded
SLBP	SLBP
Speech & Language Therapist	Speech & Language Therapist
University of Minn. - Practicum Students	Remedial Reading Teacher
	Counsellor

In September 1973, each building Resource Unit developed a list of goals for the 1973-74 school year. Each building unit will submit a written assessment of their proposed goals three times during the current school year. The goals were reviewed with the building principal, school psychologist, and the total teaching staff.

A Teacher Improvement Record is used in the development of individual resource teacher goals, both in instructional and professional growth areas. The forms and goals are submitted by each resource teacher, reviewed with the school psychologist and building principal, and reviewed

again prior to teacher evaluation dates as outlined in the Board Policy Handbook. Upon reviewal of each Teacher Improvement Record, a brief narrative is submitted by the school psychologist, and this information is forwarded to the district office for the teacher's personnel file.

RECORD KEEPING - FORMS

Forms developed for record keeping have been standardized for data collection and conference use. Several of the forms are printed on National Cash Register paper to facilitate communication among students' classroom teachers, building principals, resource staff members and the school psychologist. A Weekly Schedule Form was developed for use by resource teachers to indicate which students were seen during the week, how many conferences were held with classroom teachers, and the number of inservice meetings offered or attended.

PATTERNS OF SERVICE

In moving from a self-contained special education classroom or a tutoring service model, it was suggested that the resource teacher would have to assume more responsibility in working with classroom teachers to develop programs for children with learning problems to be used in the regular classrooms.

It was suggested that resource teachers attempt to program their time so as to have direct student contact approximately 50% of the teacher's work day, working with individual or small group tutorial situations, and to

be a resource consultant to teachers and students the remaining 50% of the time. Data gathered from the first semester of the 1973-74 school term indicates that elementary resource teachers did spend 50% of their time in direct student contact hours, and 50% dealing with other resource responsibilities. Secondary resource teachers spent 56% of their time in direct student contact hours, and 44% dealing with other resource responsibilities.

Students are referred from many sources. The majority of referrals come from classroom teachers, however counsellors, principals, parents, and students themselves may ask for resource help.

An attempt is made to follow the same routine for each student referred. The routine consists of:

1. Submitting a referral on forms found in the counsellor's office, principal's office, or Resource Units.
2. Holding an intake or initial conference with the person(s) making the referral. This is done to find out exactly why the student is being referred, what problems the student is having at the time of referral, what the expectations are of persons referring the student, and other situational factors that are pertinent in working with the student.
3. Evaluating or diagnosing the student's problem. Tests, interviews, gathering baseline information, and other assessment techniques are used to gather data that may be pertinent to the case referred.

4. Holding a staffing-programming conference. Resource personnel, and other staff members involved in working with the student, sit down to review the information that has been gathered. During this conference, specific objectives may be written to help a student overcome a particular learning problem, and responsibilities are assigned to various personnel in an attempt to help the student meet the objectives that have been designed for him.
5. Holding a review conference at appropriate intervals, to determine if the student is making progress toward meeting the objectives that have been written for him, and/or if a different program should be considered. An evaluation is made by classroom teachers and resource personnel regarding the effectiveness of each objective that is written for a student.

NUMBER OF STUDENTS SEEN BY RESOURCE UNIT TEACHERS

A concerted effort has been made to keep track of students seen between September 4, 1973 through January 18, 1974. The purpose of this effort is to give an overview of how many students have been seen by the Resource Unit teachers. Information is available as to the number of students seen at each grade level, and the types of services those students received.

During the first half of the 1973-74 school year 219 elementary students were seen by resource teachers. This is equal to 23% of the students en-

rolled in grades K - 6. 151 Junior-Senior High school age students were seen by resource teachers. This is 13% of the students enrolled in grades 7 - 12.

The above numbers and percentages do not imply that all students were seen for intensive tutorial services. Some of the students were seen for testing only, and referred back to their classroom teachers as students who are working up to their expectancy level. Many other students were programmed to work with their classroom teachers, and have not been seen, on a routine basis, by resource staff members.

CONSIDERATIONS

When reviewing the Resource Unit programs during the first half of the 1973-74 school year, the following outcomes are suggested:

1. A closer communication process has been established between classroom teachers in developing, writing, and carrying through specific objectives for students with learning problems.
2. Children feel more comfortable in attending their home attendance area school.
3. The "labelling" of students has been cut to a minimum.
4. More children are being referred, serviced, and attended to through the Resource Unit model, than in the past when the room service model was used.
5. More communication has taken place between resource teachers and parents this year.
6. More objective standardized forms have been developed, and are being used to track individual students' progress.